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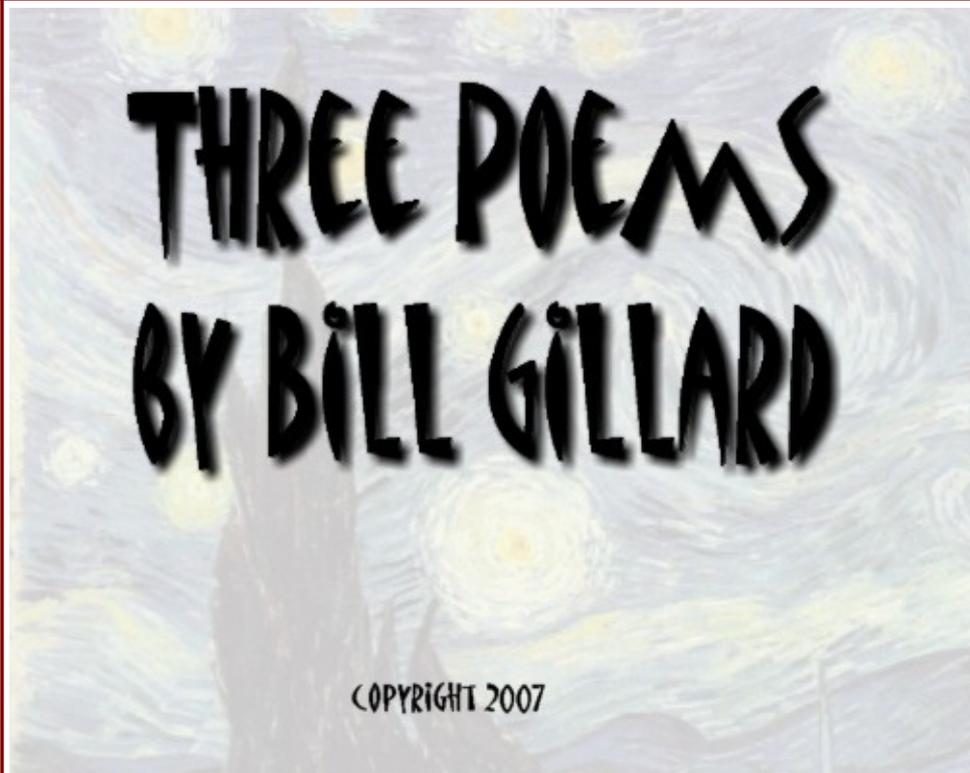
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Jeremy, the Boot Camp God

Your room is not what I expected: I thought
Of dirty clothes, of dirty magazines
13 years of too much to handle—

The priests know what to do with
Boys like you.

Bed made, blank walls, drawers empty, musty and hot.
Did you live here at all?
October came—no word from you.
Report card: abstract, thin.

I am in your bed now, in your made bed,
The ceiling cracks intersect
Loose plaster falls
Water stains.

Even before I can see that the window is painted shut,
Even before I see the crucifix on the wall above the sink,
The word "escape" flashes into my mind.
Where the hell have you gone, Jeremy?
Where the hell have you gone?

Buffalo Nicole (with a numismatic metaphor)

Third time staring at this picture
Railway tracks, blue sky behind
Three girls heading out to Vegas
Leaving lovers far behind
My Buffalo Nicole

The greatest joy, the greatest joy
The greatest joy is to give joy to the one you love

Third time staring at this nickel
She sent me in the mail today
Proud man, animal both gone
I feel a lot like this old coin
My Buffalo Nicole

High School English Department Conversation Poem

My friend Hood says poems are like onions,
and making meaning is the peeling of them.
Then from the English lounge he strolls out the door to class.

And watching him
I remember the time
I planted an onion
 that-had-sprouted-a-heavy-green-finger-through-the-red-net-cage-in-the-
 cabinet-next-to-the-stove

I planted it outside in the summer, a brown, shriveled thing
 in-a-narrow-flower-bed-next-to-my-back-door-plenty-of-midday-sun-for-my-
onion

The green finger lengthened,
Found its hand,
Grew a white flower for a nail.

In September the flower went to seed and I dug up my harvest, after months of care and interest, to see what the soil concealed. I dug with my fingers, feeling the round hardness at the base of the woody stem. I pulled gently, working the soil, hearing fragile roots snap and feeling the stem groan.

Into my hand emerged an onion.

A single
perfect
yellow
Onion.

I've got to tell Hood that reading a poem is nothing like peeling an onion.

With the thing, itself,
layer after layer, peel what you will, it's just more onion.
Smaller and smaller
misshapen and pungent --
then
nothing.

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Bill Gillard is a refugee from the high cost of living in his ancestral homeland of New Jersey. He now lives with his wife and daughters in Appleton and teaches Shakespeare and creative writing at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley. He holds an MFA in fiction from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey. His work has appeared in over twenty publications, including *Writer's Chronicle*, *Alimentum*, *The Leading Edge*, *Paradigm*, *Poetry Bay*, *Star Line*, *Slow Trains*, *Spitball*, *Aphelion*, *Dark Sky*, *Surprising STORIES*, *The Wisconsin Poet's Calendar*, *Explicator*, *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, and *The Encyclopedia of Native American Literature*.

